

2013

Inland Fisheries Division Program Notes & Updates (Winter)



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CARE & Constituent Services

NEW YOUTH FISHING PASSPORT PROGRAM. The Youth Fishing Passport is a new initiative intended to help promote environmental responsibility, stewardship, and a sense of belonging to the sportsmen community. It encourages the youth to take an active role in responsible fishing, increases awareness of fishing regulations, and makes them embrace being a true angler.

The ultimate goal of the Youth Fishing Passport Program (YFP) is to get kids and their families excited about fishing and hence select fishing as an activity of choice. To achieve this goal the Youth Fishing Passport program focuses on activities that challenge youth, incentives provided by the fishing industry to encourage youth to fish, and a support network that encompasses learning how to fish, sharing of fishing successes, and fishing events to create opportunities to remain engaged in fishing. The program is free and is available to youth under 16 years of age.

YFP Program updates (as of 3/7/2013):

- ✓ 353 registrants since the initial roll out on 12/1/2012.
- ✓ The majority of registrations have occurred since the launch of the web site on 2/1/2013 and direct connections at several shows including the Big Y kids fair, Northeast Hunting and Fishing Show, *No Child Left Inside®* Winter Festival, and Coventry Family Ice Fishing event.
- ✓ Work continues to build sponsorship of the program and a calendar of fishing related events will be added to the web site this quarter.
- ✓ A ListServ has been established to get timely and informative fishing related information to participants.

WINTER CLASSES. Hosted 19 Family Ice Fishing classes for 332 students in the towns of Ansonia, Bristol, Canton, Essex, Farmington (5), Fairfield, Glastonbury, Guilford, Litchfield, Middlefield, Milford, Monroe, New Haven, Stratford and Tolland. Certified CARE Instructors taught students about winter pond ecology, safety on the ice, ice fishing equipment, proper bait and how to rig it, and fish identification and ecology. Most ice fishing classes were sponsored by city or town park & recreation departments. Classes were also conducted for “at risk” youth and homeschool groups.



YOUTH FISHING PASSPORT

DEEP's new Youth Fishing Passport program can help engage youngsters in a lifetime of fishing experiences. The program can be found online at www.ct.gov/deep/YFP.

ICE FISHING DERBY. After being cancelled in 2012 due to unsafe ice conditions, the CARE Family Ice Fishing Derby on Coventry Lake was resurrected, attracting over 200 participants this past January. CARE provided bait, tackle, and jigging rods and tip-ups for participants to borrow. Our partners at Coventry Park and Recreation Department provided coffee, juice, hot chocolate, and snacks to participants at Patriots Park Community Center located on the lake. All children received prizes donated by members of CTFISHERMAN.COM. Trophies were also awarded to lucky anglers who caught derby winning walleye, pickerel, and perch.

Certified CARE Instructor Paul Dona is shown giving tips on proper jigging techniques to a new ice angler at the Ice Derby.



WINTER FESTIVAL. Introduced nearly 500 participants to ice fishing during the 5th annual *No Child Left Inside® Winter Festival* organized by DEEP's Parks Division. The *Winter Festival* was held at Burr Pond State Park in Torrington. CARE provided bait, tackle, jigging rods and tip-ups for participants to borrow. Participants were welcomed onto the ice by Certified CARE Instructors and Inland Fisheries Biologists for lessons on jigging and setting up tip-ups! A 'fish-fry' tent set up on the ice allowed participants to sample some of Connecticut's delicious panfish.

No Child Left Inside® Winter Festival participants lined up at the 'fish fry station' to learn how to fillet a fish and have a taste of fresh panfish!



SPRING CLASSES. Scheduled 16 Family Fishing Courses for spring 2013 in Ansonia, Bristol, Canterbury, Canton, Essex, Farmington, Glastonbury, Killingly, Killingworth, Milford, Monroe (2), Newington, Stamford, Stratford and Trumbull.

CARE CENTER PROGRAMS. Increased the number of scheduled classroom field trips to the CARE Center at Forster Pond for spring of 2013. For the third year staff has continued to expand a program where school teachers incorporate lessons from the CARE curriculum into their science lessons prior to a class trip to the CARE Center on Forster Pond. This spring 14 class field trips will be hosted at the CARE Center, each featuring a day of aquatic education and angling on Forster Pond.

MEDIA OUTREACH. Staff participated in an ice fishing and ice safety segment that was aired on ctnow.com and FOX 61 news.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING. Recruited and trained 6 new Certified CARE Instructors at the CARE Center on Forster Pond. The newest class of CARE Instructors is a diverse group of both anglers and educators. The next opportunity for CARE certification training will be June 15th. Readers who know good candidates interested in joining the program should have them contact Tom Bourret at 860-663-1656 or thomas.bourret@ct.gov.



Tom Bourret (left) with the six new CARE program certified volunteer Instructors trained this past February at a New Instructor Training course. Next training will be held June 15th.

RECRUITMENT, RECAPTURE & RETENTION EFFORTS

- ✓ An all hands meeting for IFD staff was held at Sessions Woods WMA on 2/26/13. The theme was customer service and raising the bar. Throughout the meeting we explored how IFD can better serve the angling community and how we can better communicate the wealth of fishing resources IFD has to offer.
- ✓ At the Big Y Kids Fair (2/2 and 2/3) IFD actively recruited just over 100 families into the Youth Fishing Passport Program.
- ✓ Northeast Hunting and Fishing Show (2/15-2/17) displays focused on CARE, Youth Fishing Passport as well as Northern Pike and Walleye fishing opportunities. The trophy fish awards program was held on the Saturday evening and was attended by nearly 200 people.

Inland Fish Management & Fish Culture

SPRING STOCKING

TROUT. Completed preseason trout stocking schedules and began early spring stocking. All stocked areas are scheduled to receive fish by Opening Day. Last year's unique winter weather allowed for an earlier start but recent, harsh winter conditions, have stymied trout stocking. Due to the yeoman efforts of state fish hatchery staff, more than 20,000 brook, brown and rainbow trout were stocked into lakes (through the ice) and some TMAs, since February 27th.

Approximately **640,000 catchable size trout were produced for preseason & in-season spring stocking.** In addition, 14,000 yearling (7-9") and 6,000 juvenile (4-6") trout have been produced for special programs such as TMA enhancement or sea-run trout fisheries, respectively. Approximately 380,000 trout will be released prior to Opening Day (April 20th). The following have been produced for stocking this spring:

<i>Catchable size trout/salmon</i>	<i>Juvenile/yearling trout</i>		
rainbow trout (10-12")	164,000		
rainbow trout (≥ 12 ")	38,000		
brook trout (10-12")	94,000		
brown trout (10-12")	328,000		
brown trout (≥ 12 ")	10,000		
large "survivor" brown trout (12-16")	1,000		
tiger trout (10-12")	2,000	"survivor" brown trout yearlings (7-9")	14,000
surplus broodstock (1-3 lb fish)	1,500	"sea-run" brown trout (4-6")	6,000
totals	638,500		20,000

ANGLER SURVEYS

STREAMS. Completed planning of a **Housatonic River Angler Survey** for the upper 44 miles of the Housatonic River from the Massachusetts/Connecticut state line downstream to the head of Lake Lillinonah in New Milford. This entire area of the river was last surveyed was in 1985-1986. Surveys of the two year-round Trout Management Areas began on March 1. Survey efforts will expanded to the other areas of the river on Opening Day, if staffing levels permits. This survey will assess current management on ten distinct sections of the river, including two year-round Trout Management Areas, two Smallmouth Bass Management Areas, and several sections managed under standard state wide regulation, where little is currently known. The survey will quantify and characterize angler usage, attitudes, and catch rates. This survey will run concurrently with the third and final year of the Enhanced Law Enforcement Initiative on this same section of the Housatonic. Coordination of efforts of Fisheries and Law Enforcement is expected to result in a significant and positive increase in DEEP presence on the river.

LAKES. Conducted ice-fishing **angler surveys** at eight lakes: Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (Mansfield), Crystal Lake (Ellington), Bigelow Pond (Union), Aspinook Pond (Lisbon), West Thompson Lake (Thompson), Quinebaug Lake (Killingly), Squantz Pond (New Fairfield) and Lake

Lillinonah (Brookfield). Safe ice was recorded at most of these lakes by early January; however, Lillinonah and Squantz were not safe until the end of January. These surveys assess angler catch, effort and attitudes/opinions and provide vital information to help DEEP fisheries biologists make informed management decisions.

Ben Toscano with a 39", 16 lb. northern pike landed through the ice at Lake Lillinonah on 1/7/13 (right).



Michael Munsch, happy angler at West Thompson Reservoir with his catch (left and above).

FARMINGTON RIVER TMA

SURVIVOR STRAIN BROWN TROUT. Completed elastomer tagging of 2,000 survivor strain brown trout to be stocked in the West Branch Farmington River during spring 2014. These fish will be stocked later in the spring as 14-20 inch brown trout, popular with many of the Farmington River TMA anglers.

DIDYMO. After a relatively quiet year in 2012, Mike Beauchene has been monitoring a **recent bloom of didymo** in the upper West Branch Farmington River since mid-December. Electronic media resources were used to notify anglers of this most recent bloom and to remind them to take the proper precautions to avoid spreading didymo.

Additionally, completed **trials of salt treatments as a didymo control method**. Salt solutions have been documented as a method to kill didymo. Live mats of didymo were obtained from the Farmington River and subjected to bath treatments of 0%, 2% and 2.5 % NaCl solutions. In our salt bath trials, solutions of 2% or greater completely killed didymo in under 4.5 hrs. To prevent inadvertent transfer of didymo to other waters, IFD protocols require salt treatments for transporting Farmington River Survivor Brown Trout Broodstock back to state hatcheries.

LAKE & POND SAMPLING and MONITORING

NORTHERN PIKE. Both Eastern and Western District northern pike spawning marshes are in the process of filling for the 2013 season. Broodstock collection will begin soon at Haddam Meadows on the Connecticut River and Bantam Lake.

2012 FIELD SEASON. Data collected during last spring, summer and fall sampling seasons have been analyzed and progress reports are being prepared by respective job leaders.

2013 FIELD SEASON. Planning for this year's Warmwater fisheries sampling is in the works; however, due to the 50% reduction in the number of available seasonal employee positions, less field work will be accomplished in 2013 than in previous years.

- Angler survey sites for 2013 have been identified (Housatonic River, Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, Gardner Lake and Bigelow Lake) and preliminary preparations are continuing. This is a 50% reduction in the number of angler surveys conducted last year.
- The spring schedule for statewide monitoring of lakes and ponds via boat electrofishing has been completed. Due to resource constraints, there will be an approximately 30-40% decrease in the numbers of sample sites.
- Mark-recapture population estimates for walleye and northern pike using trap nets and electrofishing will be conducted in March-April in Gardner Lake, Lake Lillinonah and Mansfield Hollow Reservoir.
- Protocols for monitoring bass tournaments are being reviewed and updated to account for increased bass culling observed in 2012 (more groups appear to be using lower limits such as five fish per two-man team, complicating measurement of actual catch rates and comparisons with historical data). Tournaments will be monitored in 2013 at Candlewood Lake, Gardner Lake and Mansfield Hollow Reservoir.

OUTREACH

CFFA ANNUAL EXPO. IFD Fish Management and Habitat Conservation and Enhancement personnel as well as DEEP ECON Law Enforcement staffed outreach efforts at the Connecticut Fly Fishermen Association's annual Expo on February 2nd. Over 350 anglers came through the exhibits. It was a great opportunity to talk about current fisheries initiatives and to introduce the public to samples of the public fishing maps available to them through the DEEP website.

ANNUAL FISH DISTRIBUTION REPORT. Completed compilation the 2012 annual fish distribution Report listing the locations and total numbers of fish stocked by IFD last year and the report will soon be available on the DEEP website and upon request. As a complement to the Annual Fish Distribution Reports, "A Historical Stocking Record, 2004-2011", which lists annual stocking numbers for each of Connecticut's 300+ stocked areas, will also be available upon request.

Habitat Conservation and Enhancement

MOOSUP RIVER

American Rivers, in partnership with the HCE program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, contracted Princeton Hydro, LLC. to provide environmental engineering and design services for the “Moosup River Fish Passage and Restoration Project”. This 10-year long restoration project includes removal of five dams/barriers and the reconnecting of over 6.9 miles of fish habitat. Initial work involves removal of Moosup River Dam # 1, which is expected to be completed by September 2014.

View of Moosup River Dam No. 1, the first barrier targeted for removal.



BOLTON LAKES

Participated in the Bolton Lakes Watershed Environmental Review Team for the Town of Bolton. Updated information was compiled in a report that included fish community data and technical guidance to protect/enhance the overall health and condition of the Bolton Lakes and Watershed. The report also addressed concerns about the possible influence of channel catfish introductions on water quality in Lower Bolton Lake that have been raised by a few lakeshore residents.

DAM REPAIRS PROJECT REVIEWS – BASHAN LAKE & BESECK LAKE

Provided technical guidance to DEEP dam safety unit regarding proposed dam repairs at Beseck Lake (Middlefield) and Bashan Lake (East Haddam). Both full dam repairs require extensive lowering of lake water levels to implement proposed repairs. Recommendations were provided to limit the depth of drawdowns and minimize potential impacts to lake fish communities and anglers.

UCONN POTENTIAL WATER SUPPLY SOURCES.

The water needs of the University of Connecticut (UConn) has been in the news and UConn’s consultant produced a report titled “Potential Sources of Water Supply, Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE)”, which evaluated potential sources of water supply to support future demands for UConn. The EIE identified three preferred alternatives for potential water sources, (1) interconnection with the Connecticut Water Company (CWC), (2) interconnection with the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), and (3) connection to the Windham Water Works (WWW) facility that is located on the Willimantic Reservoir. HCE staff reviewed this report and evaluated the environmental consequences of these water diversions alternatives relative to their effects on fisheries resources and habitats.

PEQUABUCK RIVER – BRISTOL

At the request of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) – Office of Environmental Planning, HCE staff conducted site reviews at three locations along the Pequabuck River (Bristol). Severe bank erosion at the three sites along the river caused by torrential flows associated with precipitation during Hurricane Irene caused the collapse and closure of Route 72. The site review was to visually assess the efficacy of bank stabilization that included both hard armoring and vegetation establishment.

(top right) Pequabuck River “Site A” during the initial phase of restoration, September 22, 2011.

(right) Pequabuck River “Site A” following restoration, February 7, 2013.

Also included in the restoration were the installation of in-stream habitat enhancement features such as random boulders, bank placed boulders and rock weirs.

The project fulfilled the goals of creating a stabile embankment along the Pequabuck River to protect the integrity of Route 72 and to enhance and restore in-stream and riparian habitat. However, at one location, “Site C,” efforts to restore riparian vegetation were not successful and DOT will make further attempts to do so.

Unsuccessful riparian vegetation establishment along the Pequabuck River at “Site C”, February 7, 2013.



PEQUABUCK RIVER – PLYMOUTH

Met with staff of the DEEP Inland Water Resources Division, municipal officials of the Town of Plymouth and a commercial property developer at a former industrial site along the Pequabuck River, Plymouth. The developer has purchased and has begun to demolish the former O.Z. Gedney industrial complex with plans to redevelop the site as a mixed commercial/residential property. The developer proposes to create a pedestrian trail along the river with formal access points. The river reach bisecting the site was significantly altered during the previous industrial development and is lacking in physical habitat diversity, most notably the large size in-water cover. Staff recommended the installation of habitat enhancement features consisting of random in-stream boulders and bank placed boulders. These enhancements will be incorporated into the project as per the DEEP Inland Water Resources permitting process.



(above & right) *Pequabuck River on the former O.Z. Gedney site, Plymouth.*

COASTAL SHORELINE

Staff conducted many reviews of proposed construction activities along the shoreline that require a permit from the CTDEEP, e.g. docks, bridge repairs, shoreline protection projects, dredging, small aquaculture projects. Also considered were several dredge extension requests as staff assessed what the impact would be on fisheries resources, including upcoming river herring runs.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Some large ongoing projects take considerable staff time because input by HCE staff help define the project and affect the permit applications. During the past few months, time has been spent reviewing the proposal to blast the old Q Bridge piers (New Haven), the dredging/remediation project planned for the former Exide property off the Mill River (Fairfield), and the New Haven Harbor federal navigation project dredging.

AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES (ANS) PROGRAM UPDATE

The ANS program focuses its work on education and preventing the spread of invasive species and implementing control projects, as funds are available. These are especially challenging times with increased reports of invasive aquatic species but little funding for control work. The Inland Fisheries

Division has been awarded Federal Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) grants but this funding has declined from \$43,000 in 2008 to \$24,473 in 2012. In light of the Federal Sequestration, 2013 funding may not be available.

A new Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, Maura Robie, was hired in a part-time position (16 hours per week) for the period November 2, 2012 through August 31, 2013. The Project Agreement calls for Maura to be co-supervised by Nancy Murray and Nancy Balcom with UCONN Sea Grant. The following tasks have been completed to date:

- ✓ Developed ANS educational materials for trade shows including Water Garden fact sheets; banners (32' x 84)" for ANS definition (with cartoon characters), boating & angler flyers (Clean, Drain, Dry procedures) and a portable four-panel table display.
- ✓ Updated CT ANS Management Plan aquatic nuisance species and invasive vector lists.

Participated in Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point Planning (HACCP) to prevent the spread of Invasive Species; Staff researched protocols and developed model draft plans/forms for mechanical harvest and suction harvest of invasive aquatic plants.

The ANS Program provided \$20,000 to the DEEP Boating Division to hire additional Boating Educational Assistants (BEAs) in 2012 and 2013. Primary duties include providing educational materials on preventing the spread of aquatic plants and animals and offering boat inspections for invasive species.

Two projects on zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) were recently completed by contractors with funding from the Federal ANS Program.

Project 1: *"Connecticut Zebra Mussel Inventory and Comprehensive Risk Assessment"* Biodrawvversity LLC. conducted zebra mussel surveys in northwest Connecticut, including the upper Housatonic River, to determine the presence or absence of zebra mussels and provide a Risk Assessment that identifies the potential for zebra mussel colonization in high-risk water bodies (which have higher rates of calcium). SCUBA divers conducted extensive surveys in the river and lakes and deployed settling plates on docks and other hard surfaces to determine the distribution and rate of juvenile settlement. The rate of juvenile settlement helps us understand the potential for infestation.

Project 2: *"Early Detection/Monitoring of zebra mussel Introductions from the Housatonic River in Lakes Candlewood, Lillinonah and Zoar."* This final report was just submitted for a two-year study conducted by Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) that demonstrated that zebra mussel veligers (planktonic larva stage of zebra mussel) can be detected by using cross-polarized light microscopy (CPLM) and the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). WCSU researchers are confident about the efficacy of the two methods of zebra mussel veliger detection. The CPLM method allows rapid examination and identification of samples. WCSU researchers also identified the best DNA primers for the PCR veliger early detection method.

By the completion of this project the Western CT State University researchers were confident with the two methods of zebra mussel veliger detection. The CPLM method allows for examining and identifying samples rapidly. By the end of this study, Western CT State University researchers also identified the best DNA primers for the PCR veliger early detection.

Diadromous Fisheries Restoration

FISHWAYS & DAMS

- The StanChem Fishway (Mattabesset River, Berlin) is still under construction. In addition to providing technical oversight on this project, staff installed a unique eel pass at this location. The eel pass was not part of the Denil fishway construction contract between The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Machnik Brothers Construction but was constructed and installed by the Inland Fisheries Division and TNC. It consists of a long pipe with climbing substrate that passes through the upper and lower walls and then was buried alongside the Denil fishway.

(right) The upper portion of the StanChem Fishway under construction. The red metal doors (left) lead down into the future counting house with a window. The eel pass is located on the other side of the far wall.



(left) Sections of the StanChem eel pass prior to assembly. Plastic rings are wrapped in plastic mesh and slid into the PVC pipes, which are then glued together and passed through the hole in the concrete wall to reach the river.



(right) The lower section of the StanChem eel pass, glued together, in place, prior to backfilling by the contractor.

- Continued to work with Macchi Engineers of Hartford and the State of Connecticut Department of Construction Services on the design of a fishlift for the Rainbow Dam to replace the inadequate Rainbow Dam Fishway. Macchi recently submitted 35% completion plans for agency review.
- A number of funding opportunities arose during the past few months. Several NGO partners submitted applications for grants to pursue fish passage projects at dams in Connecticut and staff assisted with the development of these applications. Also, the Department decided to apply to one grant program that offered large grants for part of the construction costs for the Rainbow Dam Fishlift. In addition, Congress appropriated for relief funds to Northeast states as a result of Hurricane Sandy. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service expects to receive substantial funds and staff worked with other staff from the Bureau of Natural Resources and NGO partners to submit projects for funding. Dam removal projects could qualify for such funds because many of our proposed removal projects target deteriorating dams that not only block fish runs but also were damaged by Hurricane Sandy and pose a threat to public safety during future flood events.
- Co-hosted (with staff from the Office of Long Island Sound Programs) the annual meeting of the Riverine Migratory Corridor committee of the Long Island Sound Study. This group consists of agency staff from the CTDEEP, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NOAA-Fisheries, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and importantly, the many NGO partners that work with the Inland Fisheries Division to plan and implement projects to design and build fishways and remove dams. These meetings are important to update databases, discuss issues of common interest, share tips, and discuss funding and coordination.

ATLANTIC SALMON

- A new season for the Salmon-in-the-Classroom program began in December with the Connecticut River Salmon Association picking up 20,000 Atlantic salmon eggs from the Kensington State Fish Hatchery for distribution to 64 schools across the state. This program is expected to expose nearly 6,000 students to salmon and aquatic resource education.
- At about the same time the schools were getting their eggs, staff transferred approximately 200,000 'eyed' Atlantic salmon eggs from the Kensington State Fish Hatchery to streamside incubators operated by the Tributary Mill Conservancy in Old Lyme. This is a privately-run volunteer hatchery in an old mill that uses brook water to incubate salmon eggs. When these eggs hatch, the fry will be stocked into the Salmon River watershed.
- An additional 72,000 'eyed' Atlantic salmon eggs were transferred from the Kensington State Fish Hatchery to the Roxbury State Fish Hatchery in Roxbury, VT. The Kensington Hatchery did not have room to hatch these eggs so Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife will hatch them at Roxbury and stock the salmon fry in Vermont streams to support the Connecticut River Restoration Program. This will be the last Atlantic salmon to be stocked in Vermont waters.

COOPERATION AND OUTREACH

- Made several presentations to various groups and provided staff support at the Department's booth at the Northeast Fishing and hunting show.
- Winter is a time for meetings to become better informed, review data and coordinate future activities, Staff attended:
 - ✓ A river herring workshop in Maine sponsored by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation,
 - ✓ A scientific meeting of the Diadromous Species Research and Restoration Network in Maine,
 - ✓ A workshop entitled "Scientific Communications for Natural Resource Professionals" offered by the American Fisheries Society in Woods Hole, MA intended to improve the writing and editing of scientific manuscripts,
 - ✓ A meeting of the Northeast River Herring Workgroup in the Marine Headquarters in Old Lyme,
 - ✓ The Connecticut River Research Forum sponsored by the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission and held in Hadley, MA,
 - ✓ The annual meeting of the U.S. Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee at the Marine Headquarters in Old Lyme (the first time in over 25 years that Connecticut has hosted this meeting).

Salmon biologists from many agencies throughout the Northeast met in Old Lyme for the annual U.S. Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee. Agencies represented were USFWS, NOAA-Fisheries, Maine-Dept Marine Resources and CT DEEP



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